

3/29/72

Dear Pearl,

Mailing this will await my hearing from you again. Lately, when the weather and other things permit, I have been engaged in the liberation of the pines from the respression of honeysuckle vines and enormous climbing roses without what you called the "so Mexican" thing of chopping myself. This gives me a bit of fresh air, some exercise, and time for thinking about other than what occupies my mind when I am working in the house. Yesterday some of the things you discussed when you were here came to mind in vague shape.

I think you told me that your early interest in Garrison included Banister and some of the strange groups of various extremist stripe. I don't know if you got in to one of Banister's former partners, War and his strange death, but I think you did, and I don't remember if I told you something I learned of Banister from one of Garrison's enemies and believe, so here goes:

Banister had brain damage before he went to New Orleans. Officially he was given his job there by deLesseps (Chep) Morrison but the man behind it was my source on the damage, Aaron "ohn. The stories in the Chicago papers on Banister's leaving there and going to N.O. are untrue. In N.O. Cheps was regarded as a liberal and Hugh Ward, Banister's former partner, as to the right. It is hard to understand how Ward could have been Morrison's pilot on that trip. The man who to the best of my knowledge is the best expert on this whole affair is Hoke May, and what I know of it I regard as his literary property and not proper for me to give to another writer, even though the last time I saw Hoke he was as disgustingly and arrogantly and incoherently drunk as I have ever seen anyone. When you understand that my newspapering goes back to the early 30s, you can better understand this description. Three of the men I then worked with wound up in the boobyhatch with DTs. Hoke had been a desk man with the States-Item, with an interest in the Sweigert Advertising Co. He left the S-I, was with New Orleans Magazine and the adv. ag., and when I was last there and tried to call him, the adv. co. said he had started his own and was no longer with them. I tried to phone him but he was not in and I didn't have time to return the call. He had broken up with his wife the time of this drunken meeting at Barbara Reid's, was going with a pretty-faced and dirty-minded FBI secretary he ultimately married and I understand that has since Phitted. The last I heard from Garrison's office, possibly from Sciambra, is that he had straightened out again, whatever that means. It was for this reason that I had called him, for he was a good reporter and knew the local scene as few do. Now it is my understanding, and I don't recall my source, that at the time of his death Morrison had a commission from JFK to look into CIA operations in Latin America. I can see how this could fit your scheme of things, but Ward in it I have trouble seeing.

I don't recall what I have of Banister's so-called anti-Communist outfit, but if it is of interest to you, I have other such stuff from the undependables, like Gerry Patrick Hemming, Loran Hall (about Guy Cabaldon and his friend in the Mexican Secret Police), etc. I have a letter Hall wrote the President of Guatemala involving, among others, Robert K. Brown and some juicy FBI and Secret Service reports on Brown and right-wingers. However, despite their pretenses, I have difficulty believing that this strange assortment of the most eminently undependable really were Agency-connected. They are just capable of bad things, not bright people at all. Most of my interviews with Hall are transcribed and are too extensive and too rambling to mail. My last with Hemming is not (he outlined a planned and allegedly Agency-supported attack on Haiti among other things). If this kind of thing interests you, when you are again here my Dean file may interest you, too. He was another fink, an official one, and he travelled with Hall and others when Hall managed Cabaldon's campaign for Congress.

Best,